REMARKS

The application has been reviewed in light of the Office Action dated April 6, 2004.

Claims 1-39 are pending in this application, with claims 1, 15, 27 and 39 being in independent

form. By the present Amendment, claims 1, 3, 15, 17, 27, 29, and 39 have been amended. It

is submitted that no new matter has been added and no new issues have been raised by the

present Amendment.

Claims 1-3, 5-6, 10-17, 19-20, 23-29, 31-32, and 35-39 have been rejected under 35

U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over International Application No. WO

00/57318 to Forde et al. in view of International Application No. WO 00/62220 to Brown et

al. Claims 4, 18, and 30 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being

unpatentable over Forde et al. in view of Brown et al. and further in view of U.S. Patent

Application Publication No. 2002/0078140 A1 to Kelly et al. Claims 7-9, 21,22, 33, and 34

have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Forde et al.

in view of Brown et al. and Kelly et al. and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,742,769 to

Lee et al.

Applicant has carefully considered the Examiner's comments and the cited art, and

respectfully submits independent claims 1, 15, 27 and 39 are patentable over the cited art for

at least the following reasons.

Independent claim 1 relates to a digital signature system comprising a database holding

access control rules that identify documents authorized users are allowed to have electronically

signed, and a signing system capable of receiving signature requests from a plurality of

authorized users, each signature request including a preexisting document to be signed,

wherein the signing system parses the preexisting document to be signed and compares

information obtained hereby to the access control rules stored in the database to determine whether the authorized user is authorized to have the document signed; and wherein if it is determined that the authorized user is authorized to have the document signed, the signing system signs the document using authentication information unique to the signing system.

Forde et al., as understood by Applicant, relates to a computer-based method and system for applying a set of business signing rules for the processing of electronic documents. The method includes the steps of verifying the identity of an authorized user using a predefined verification protocol, determining a set of privileges associated with the authorized user, filling in an electronic document in accordance with the privileges and based on inputs provided by the authorized user, attaching a digital signature to the electronic document, and transmitting the electronic document to an authorized recipient of the electronic documents in accordance with the privileges.

The Office Action states that Forde et al. does not disclose parsing a document, and apparently cites Brown et al. as disclosing this element (see Office Action, p. 4, lines. 12-15).

Brown el al., as understood by Applicant, relates to a virtual signing room that facilitates the collaborative creation, editing, reviewing, and signing of electronic-documents by parties situated in remote locations. The room provides real-time access to agreement documents regardless of geographical locations of the various parties involved, and provides a complete audit trail for all activity occurring in the room. The virtual signing room accepts and processes digital signatures coupled with secure authentication of parties to implement document signing.

As understood by Applicants, the electronic document in Forde is created by the system for processing electronic documents by "filling-out said electronic document based on

inputs provided by said authorized user." (Forde claim 1). That is, as understood by

Applicant, Forde supplies "inputs" that the system for processing electronic documents uses to

create the electronic document in an apparent fill-in-the-blanks fashion.

In contrast, the present disclosure allows an authorized user to send a preexisting

document to the signing system to be signed

Applicant finds no teaching or suggestion in the cited art of a signing system capable of

receiving signature requests from a plurality of authorized users, each signature request

including a preexisting document to be signed, wherein said signing system parses the

preexisting document to be signed and compares information obtained thereby to the access

control rules stored in said database to determine whether the authorized user is authorized to

have the document signed, and wherein if it is determined that the authorized user is

authorized to have the document signed, the signing system signs the document using

authentication information unique to the signing system.

Accordingly, Applicant submits independent claim 1 is patentable over the cited art.

Independent claims 15, 27 and 34 are believed to be patentable for at least similar reasons.
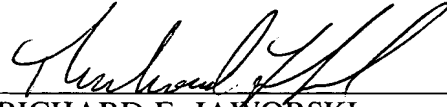
The Office is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees that may be required in

connection with this amendment and to credit any overpayment to our Deposit Account No.

03-3125.

If a petition for an extension of time is required to make this response timely, this

paper should be considered to be such a petition, and the Commissioner is authorized to

charge the requisite fees to our Deposit Account No. 03-3125.

If a telephone interview could advance the prosecution of this application, the Examiner

is respectfully requested to call the undersigned attorney.

Entry of this amendment and allowance of this application are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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